

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, ranking members Hwang, Somers, Petit, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Martin Isaac and I live in Trumbull CT. I am a board member with CT Against Gun Violence and am here today to speak in **support of HB-5397 and SB-477** that include provisions to address the crisis of community gun violence in CT.

There is an urgent need to act, and I am asking you to support the creation of a permanent gun violence intervention and prevention office within the Department of Public Health.

Over the years, this legislative body has passed strong gun laws to protect the populace. And it's worked. As ranked by the [Giffords organization](#), CT is ranked 3rd in their gun safety index and 45th for gun death rates per capita. That is not a surprise – strong gun laws yield lower death rates.

And while on a comparative basis that sounds good, last year gun homicides in our state were the highest in 25 years, nearly double the level in 2018 – and this brutal carnage demands a response.

The primary issue we need to address is the violence in our cities. It does not often make the news, but day after day, month after month, our city residents are terrorized by shootings and death.

The sad fact is it does not have to be this way.

Years ago, we did not understand how to stop violence in our cities. Carnage was unanswered because seemingly there were no answers. [That is not where we stand today.](#)

Connecticut needs to invest in intervention and prevention mechanisms -- Evidence based programs with a proven record of success. These programs work because they are aimed at individuals at high risk of perpetrating or being victims of gun violence in high-violence communities.

Many of you in this room are familiar with one such program, Project Longevity. The good news is that there are additional programs that are even more effective. Hospital-based violence intervention and violence interrupters have [proven track records](#) of reducing gun violence.

We have a moral calling to act. And I would like to thank my Senator, Senator Moore, for being a leading voice for change.

Financially, it is equally compelling to act. It's [estimated](#) that gun violence costs Connecticut taxpayers between [\\$60 and \\$90 million annually](#). Every dollar invested in saving lives saves money too.

While I commend the Governor for directing DPH to establish a gun violence prevention and intervention program, and for allocating \$3.6 million from the American Rescue Plan to fund the program, it is simply not sufficient.

I urge the legislature to Establish an Office of Gun Violence Prevention in the DPH and to permanently fund this initiative as proposed in HB 5397.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

Sincerely

Martin Isaac